

Five steps to a file that prints first time

A summary for customers supplying artwork to Stephens & George Print Group.

1 Work out your pixel budget before you generate

A full-bleed A4 image needs $2,551 \times 3,579$ pixels at 300 ppi — more than most generators manage in one pass, and upscaling invents detail rather than recovering it.

2 Use AI for the pictures, not for the page

Image generators produce flat RGB rasters. They cannot make CMYK, vector, bleed, page geometry or embedded fonts. Keep all type and logos out of generated images.

3 Assemble the file in a real layout application

InDesign, Illustrator or QuarkXPress is best, scripted by an AI agent if you like. Never build final artwork from a web page, a browser or an online design tool — there is no dependable CMYK path.

4 Give the agent the whole specification, every time

Nothing in the tool chain defaults to print settings. State the trim size, bleed, page boxes, crop marks, colour, fonts and resolution explicitly. Use the first block below.

5 Make it prove the result — then check it yourself

An AI agent cannot see its own output, so ask for measured values, never confirmations. Run the second block below on your pages before you send them, then look at the edges at 100% yourself.

THE FILE WE NEED

PDF/X-4	ISO 15930-7. PDF/X-1a also accepted.	CMYK only	Nothing in RGB — logos and blacks included.
3 mm bleed	Artwork must physically extend into it.	4 mm safe margin	No text or essential detail closer to trim.
Crop marks	Present, offset at least 3 mm from trim.	300 ppi	At placed size, after scaling. 1200 for line art.
Fonts embedded	100%, fully or subsetted. No Courier.	Ink limit	330% gloss and silk · 280% uncoated.

1 · PASTE THIS BEFORE YOU START — THE SPECIFICATION

Context: this work will be printed by Stephens & George Print Group on a sheet-fed lithographic press. Final artwork must be a PDF/X-4 file, CMYK, 3 mm bleed on all edges with artwork physically extending into the bleed, crop marks offset 3 mm, TrimBox and BleedBox set correctly, all text and essential detail at least 4 mm inside trim, all fonts embedded, all images 300 ppi at placed size, total ink coverage under 330% on gloss or silk and 280% on uncoated, small black text 100% K. Do not tell me a requirement is met unless you have checked the actual file. Say "NOT VERIFIED" where you have not.

2 · PASTE THIS BEFORE YOU SEND — THE CHECK

Attached are the pages I intend to supply to Stephens & George for sheet-fed litho printing. You did not create these files. Inspect the actual file — infer nothing from the filename or from how it looks. Report the measured value for each item below. Where you cannot check something, write "NOT VERIFIED" rather than guessing.

1. PDF/X conformance level written into the file
2. MediaBox, TrimBox, BleedBox and CropBox for page 1, in mm
3. Whether TrimBox is identical on every page
4. The output intent ICC profile name
5. Every colour space present in the file
6. Every font, and whether embedded, subsetted or referenced
7. Effective ppi of every placed image at placed size
8. Highest total area coverage found, and where
9. Whether crop marks are present and their offset in mm

Then check the artwork, not just the metadata: where an element runs off the edge, does it actually reach the BleedBox, or stop at the trim line? List every point where these pages fail the specification above. Be adversarial — find faults, do not reassure me.

This is the summary. The full guide — *Preparing AI-Generated Artwork for Print* — adds the resolution arithmetic, seven prompt templates, a preflight checklist and troubleshooting. Bleed, ink limit and colour profile vary by stock and binding, so check your job specification or ask Prepress.